

**Case 3373*****Ateles geoffroyi* (Mammalia, Primates): proposed attribution of authorship to Kuhl, 1820**

Colin Groves and Justin J.H. Hines

*School of Archaeology & Anthropology, Australian National University, Canberra, A.C.T. 0200, Australia (e-mail: Colin.Groves@anu.edu.au)*

Paulina D. Jenkins

*Department of Zoology, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K. (e-mail: p.jenkins@nhm.ac.uk)*

**Abstract.** The purpose of this application, under Article 50.1 of the Code, is to validate the common but incorrect attribution of the name *Ateles geoffroyi* to Kuhl (1820). This is a longstanding error perpetuated in the primate literature and it is proposed that the attribution of the name to Kuhl (1820) be validated.

**Keywords.** Nomenclature; taxonomy; *Ateles*; *Ateles geoffroyi*; *Ateles melanochir*; Kuhl; Nicaragua; spider monkey.

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1. The generic name *Ateles* was introduced by E. Geoffroy St. Hilaire (1806, p. 269). He attributed five species to it, of which three were spider monkeys from South America (including the type species, *Simia paniscus* Linnaeus, 1766); one was the Muriqui or woolly spider monkey, now referred to a separate genus *Brachyteles*; the fifth was an African colobus monkey, referred to *Ateles* only with considerable misgivings and later (Geoffroy, 1812) excluded from the genus.

2. What was effectively the first spider monkey from Central America was described by Desmarest (1820, p. 76) as *Ateles melanochir*. Desmarest said merely that it was 'An undescribed new species, from the collection of the MNHN of Paris' but Rode (1938, p. 28) recorded the animal as having died in 1819 in the Ferrand Menagerie. The original locality of the specimen was unknown; it was fixed by Kellogg & Goldman (1944) as San Juan del Norte, Nicaragua, though the validity of this fixation has never been tested by examination of the type specimen, which is still in the collection of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

3. In the same year, Kuhl (1820, p. 26) described a spider monkey from a specimen 'In Museo Parisiensi', which from his description (in Latin) is evidently the same specimen described by Desmarest (1820). His heading is '*Ateles* Geoffroy. mihi species inedita' – meaning that it belongs to the genus *Ateles* Geoffroy, but is of a species 'unknown to me'. It is interesting that, a few lines earlier, he described a new species, *Ateles fuliginosus*, and compared it to '*Atelem* Geoffroyi versis' ('Geoffroy's *Ateles*, below'); nonetheless, the description being in Latin, there is no indication that he intended to describe a species as *Ateles geoffroyi*. Kuhl's book was evidently published earlier in 1820 than Desmarest's, because Desmarest refers in his introduction to following the observations of recent naturalists including Kuhl, and

also on page 72 to *A. hypoxanthus* as a 'new species distinguished by M le docteur Kuhl'.

4. Under *Cebus geoffroyi*, Fischer (1829, p. 40) attributed the name *Ateles geoffroyi* to Kuhl, with *Ateles melanochir* Desmarest as a synonym. This was apparently the first attribution of the name to Kuhl. Wagner in Schreber (1840) followed suit, and from that time onwards most writers on primates have assumed that Kuhl described a species *Ateles geoffroyi* and that this is the earliest available name for a Central American spider monkey. The Commission Secretariat holds an extensive list of publications in which this attribution is followed (e.g. Napier & Napier, 1967, p. 59; Klein, 1971; Mittermeier & Fleagle, 1976). Elliot (1912), who gave an extensive bibliographic listing of primate names, continued to refer to *Ateles geoffroyi* Kuhl, 1820. Sherborn (1926, p. 2664) also attributed the authorship to Kuhl, but spelled the species name 'geoffroy'. The name *Ateles melanochir* Desmarest, 1820 was rarely used as a valid name (e.g. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1851, p. 49)) since the time of its publication and can be considered a nomen oblitum. Fischer (1829) made the name *Ateles geoffroyi* available, but has never been recognized as the author of the name.

5. The only author who seems to have checked the original source was Hill (1962, p. 463), who wrote: 'The specific name *geoffroyi* nowadays applied to this monkey should, in all probability, be replaced by *melanochir* Desmarest . . .' and went on to recount the history of (3) above. It was Hill's footnote that alerted us to the probability that all might not be well with current nomenclature.

6. Stability would be best served by formalizing the fiction that Kuhl described a species called *Ateles geoffroyi*. Kuhl's description was based on the same specimen as *A. melanochir*, so that specimen becomes the type of both names. This preserves current and long accepted nomenclature.

7. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary power to rule that the name *Ateles geoffroyi* is deemed to be available from Kuhl (1820);
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *geoffroyi* Kuhl, 1820, as published in the combination '*Ateles* Geoffroy. mihi species inedita' and ruled in (1) above to be *Ateles geoffroyi*.

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Acknowledgement of receipt of this application was published in BZN **63**: 2.

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